CHAPTER II.

Early Career of al-Muhallab.

The birth of al-Muhallab (1) has been variously placed in the year 7 or 8 A.H. and correspondingly his death in the year 82 or 83 A.H., it being commonly agreed among all authorities that he died at the age of 76. As it is more probable that he died in 82, it follows that his birth should be placed in the year 7.

'Abū Šufra may or may not have been a soldier in his early days but it is clear that al-Muhallab grew up in martial traditions. Being the son of a soldier, it is no surprise that he joined the army at an early age. We first find his mention in the Basran army which advanced from its base under the command of 'Abū Mūsā al-’Ash'ārī, the governor of al-Basra, with the object of clearing the north-eastern limits of the province from Bairūdh(2), probably to the west of the river Karkhā near Baṣīnna, to Manāqibīr of the hostile Kurds and Persians who had assembled...

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(1). The derivation of ‘الملقب’ is explained thus:

(2). Yaq. 1/786.
thither in large numbers in the hope of causing harassment to or even inflicting a defeat on the Muslims by taking advantage of the depletion of their strength due to the diversion of a large number of their forces in a general offensive against the various provinces of Persia which came off about that time. This army laid a siege to Manāḏḥir in the month of Ḥamādan, 21 A.H. at which event al-Muhallab himself says he was present, his age at the time being barely fourteen years. It is not known what position he held but, of course, it could not be above that of a young recruit. The siege had not yet concluded when 'Abū Mūsā was diverted to 'Iṣafānān and in his absence al-Rabī' b. Ziyād, a prominent lieutenant upon whom the command had devolved, accomplished the victory (1).

(1). The reports on this point are so very confused and conflicting as to require a special note.

A. According to Bal. 377 seq., 'Abū Mūsā advanced from al-Baṣra and laid a hard and prolonged siege to Manāḏḥir during which al-Mahājir b. Ziyād courted death and met it fasting. The siege had not yet concluded when 'Abū Mūsā left the command in the hands of al-Rabī', brother of al-Mahājir, and advanced further for the conquest of al-Sis, Rāmahurmuz, Tustar and Jundusābūr. On his return march, 'Abū Mūsā again passed through Manāḏḥir which had been successfully captured by al-Rabī' during his absence.

B. According to Saif in Tab. 1/2703 seq., it was in the year 17 A.H. that 'Umar agreed to the proposal of a general offensive against Persia and for this purpose constituted various army detachments assigning a particular region to each. These various detachments could not for various reasons carry out their offensive till a much later date. Now, at the same time that 'Umar allowed the general offensive, he, with his characteristic foresight, also wrote to 'Abū Mūsā, the governor of al-Baṣra, to move to the farthest limits of the district in order to check any possible incursion of hostiles from the north east. 'Abū Mūsā delayed his move till the Kurds and the Persians assembled at Bairūḍh. At last, however, he proceeded in the month of Ramāḍān towards Bairūḍh till he engaged the enemy at a place between Nahr Tīrā and Manāḏḥir. The *
From 21 up to 36 A.H. we hear nothing about al-Muhallab, which indicates that he had not yet risen to

* battle proved severe and prolonged, a memorable event
being the courting of martyrdom by al-Mahājir b. Ziyād in
the state of fasting. Victory had not yet been achieved
when 'Abū Mūsā was ordered to proceed to 'Isfahān to the
success of the Kufan army which under 'Abdullāh b.
'Abdullāh b. 'Imām had already opened attack against
al-Jawāfīb, the Persian satrap. Accordingly, 'Abū Mūsā
left the operations in the hands of al-Rabī who completed
the victory before the former's return from 'Isfahān.

These events are recorded in Tab. under the year
23 but the battle of 'Isfahān to which 'Abū Mūsā is reported
to have turned, occurred in 21 and hence they must be
taken to belong to the same year. (Bal. 312 mentions the
conquest of 'Isfahān in 23 by 'Abdullāh b. Budail but
that is an entirely different version).

Now a comparison of the above two reports along with
other relevant matter in Tab. leaves no doubt that they
are but two different versions of one and the same event.
The manner in which al-Mahājir met martyrdom is recorded
in either place in almost exactly the same terms. Similarly
the fact that 'Abū Mūsā was diverted before the end of the
siege and that the victory was won by al-Rabī during his
absence are common factors. The main discrepancy is that
Bal. represents the siege of Manādhir as if it were the
first attempt to conquer the place and hence he links it
with the conquest of 'al-Sūs, Ramahuruz etc. As a matter
of fact, Manādhir, along with Nahr Tīrā and Suq al-Ahwaz,
had been reduced long before the governorship of 'Abū Mūsā
and there were already established two garrisons at
Manādhir and Nahr Tīrā in charge of Sulma b. al-Qain and
Harmala b. Murāfa respectively, both of whom had taken
a prominent part in the conquest. (Tab. 1/2534 seq.). The
conquest of Ramahuruz, Tustar, al-Sūs and Jundesābūr
decidedly belongs to a later date (17 A.H.) and was
achieved by 'Abū Mūsā jointly with the Kufan army (Tab.
1/2551 seq.; Dain. 137-40). Bal. does not mention any
rebellion which might have necessitated a reconquest of
Manādhir by 'Abū Mūsā along with the conquest of Tustar and
al-Sūs. As against it, the detailed report in Tab. clearly
mentions the presence of Sulma and Harmala at Manādhir
and Nahr Tīrā respectively when Nu'mān b. Mugarrin passed
these places on his way to Ramahuruz in the same year 17.
This is indeed more consistent with facts.*
prominence. In the year 36 al-Bagra was the scene of the famous Battle of the Camel in which the 'Azd of the town fought on the side of 'Ayishah but were ultimately defeated and compelled to acknowledge 'Ali (1). On the submission of the 'Azd, 'Ali for the first time conferred a command on al-Muhallab (2). Now, this short notice is a sure indication of the activities of al-Muhallab during the long gap. He must have continued as a soldier in the garrison of al-Bagra sharing the fortunes of his tribe and progressing steadily on the road to glory till he attracted the attention of 'Ali and received the first command at his hands at the age of 29.

Again from 36 up to 43 there is another gap but his emergence in 43 as one of 'al-'ashraf' i.e., prominent nobles, shows that al-Muhallab had all the time been winning fresh military honours and making a name for himself. In the year 43 he came to Sijistān as a high military officer in the army of 'Abdur Rahman b. Samira, who was

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* Thus we see that the version of Tab. as regards the event in which al-Muhājir b. Ziyād sought martyrdom, is more credible. That Bal. describes it as 'a siege of Manādir while according to Tab. it took place between Nahr Tirā and Manādir', is of little consequence. The account in Tab. clearly suggests that the hostiles had assembled near Bairūd but moved towards Manādir in front of 'Abū Mūsā's advancing army. It is, therefore, safe to assume that the siege of Manādir at which al-Muhallab says he was present (Bal. 378), is an event of Ramadān, 21 A.H.

(1) Tab. 1/3189.

(2) Isa. 3/535.
sent to that province by ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Amīr, Mi‘āwiya’s governor at al-Baṣra. Among his colleagues in ‘Abdur Raḥmān’s army were ‘Abbad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥabatī, ‘Umar b. ‘Ubaidullāh b. Ma‘ṣmar al-Taimī, ‘Abdullāh b. Khāzīm al-Jumāmī and Qaṭārī b. al-Fuṣā’al, the future leader of the ʿAzāriqā, all of whom we will meet in the following pages. ‘Abdur Raḥmān led a victorious march through the province via Balkh (1) till he attacked Kābūl and laid a prolonged siege to it (2). At last the Muslims succeeded by means of the ballista in effecting a wide breach in the defences with the result that the next morning the besieged townspeople were compelled to come out of their stronghold. By a happy chance, an elephant of the besieged army was struck by Ḥbn Khāzīm or, according to ʿAbū al-ʿAbdillāh al-Mahallāb when it was just under the gates of the city. The huge carcass of the fallen elephant blocked the gate in such a way that the doors could not be closed any more and so the Muslims entered the town and captured it. Al-Mahallāb together with ‘Umar b. ‘Ubaidullāh b. Ma‘ṣmar is also said to have taken the news of victory to the capital (3).

In the following year (A.H. 44 - A.D. 664) al-Muhallāb detached himself from the main army of ‘Abdur Raḥmān and advancing from the direction of Kābūl made an

(1). Yqbi. 2/258.

(2). The ruler of Kābūl was called Kābūl Shāh. He was lame and is reported to have turned Muslim when brought as a captive before ‘Abdur Raḥmān. (Elliot, 2/414 note 1 from Tarjuma-i-Futuḥat of ʿAbd al-Malik b. Amīr Kūfī).

(3). Bal. 396; IAth. 3/221.
incursion into the territory lying between that city and Multan on the north-western frontier of India. Only two places, -- Banna (Bannū) and Al-Ahwār (Lahore) (1) --, are

(1) According to Bal. both Banna and Al-ahwār lay 'between Multan and Kābūl.' The former is described in Yaq. as 'a city in (the country of) Kābul.' The name Banna sounds strikingly similar to Bannū, a town and district in the extreme north-west of India lying south of the river Kābul. No doubt, the present-day town of Bannū was founded so late as in 1848 by Sir Herbert Edwardes, whence it was also called Edwardes-abad (Gaz. of India Vol. VI, 402), but the country around it has from early times borne that name of which Banna seems to be the older or perhaps the corrupted form. As the name of Kābul or Kābulistan was in those days applied to a vast country extending from the Indian border to Ghazna (Yaq. 4/220), Yaq.'s description of Bannū quite fits in with the assumption that it must have been situated somewhere in the hilly tract lying south of the river Kābul comprising the basin of the Suram and the Tochi rivers.

At Banna al-Mahallab must have been subjected to a night attack, the memory of which is preserved by an Adite in the following verse:

Al-miṣrāt az-zulidawīyyah bītītī bītītī
Bītītī bītītī bītītī bītītī bītītī bītītī

Bal. 433; Yaq. 1/747 with a notable variant, which would mean that the night attack was inflicted by al-Mahallab. This verse also suggests that the detachment of al-Mahallab consisted predominantly of the Adites.

Al-Ahwār, also more commonly Lahāwur, Lauhār (Yaq. 4/371) and even Lahār (Yaq. 1/747), according to Bal. (above), it must have been situated above Multan. Yaq. only says that it is a big well-known city in al-Kindī. 'Ali Mahjat (p. 37), identifies it with Lahore which is also the assumption of Sir H. Elliot. Lahore is noticed by Nisān Tisen (A.D. 630). (Gazetteer of India, Oxford 1900, Vol. XVI p. 105).
named as having been visited by him during this expedition and in the same connection there is also a mention of an encounter between him and eighteen 'Turk' horsemen, all of whom were killed, in the country of al-Qīqān (Baluchistan) (1). This encounter, though not so very important, is yet remarkable in that it led to the introduction of an innovation in the Muslim army. Observing that the Turk horsemen, all of whom rode crop-tailed horses, were exceptionally brisk and active, al-Muallab felt that cropped tails facilitated quick movements and readily adopted the practice for his own army. Thus, he is remembered as the first Muslim who docked the tail of his horses (2).

(1) Qīqān or Kaikān, Kaikānān, Kīkānān, Kabarkānān and Kirkānān. It is only possible to form a very general idea of its position. Bal. says that 'it formed a portion of al-Sind in the direction of Khurāsan.' (It must be remembered that in early days 'Khurāsan' was applicable to all the land east of the Iranian Desert right up to the borders of India and the boundaries of al-Sind extended so far as to include Baluchistan and part of the modern State of Baluchistan. Further it can be gathered from the same source that horses from this country were much prized (p. 433) and that it must have been circumjacent to al-Qīqān (also called al-Budh and identified with the modern Kachhi) and also must have had very close connection with Qusār (p. 434) Hiuen Tsiang also mentions the country of Qīqān, situated to the south of Kabul, Ibn Hauqal (al-Masalik wa l-Mamlāk p. 232) and al-Idrīṣī mention Kirkābān, Kabarakānān or Kirkānān as a city which was the seat of the governor of Qusār. This can only be taken to mean that there was both a town and a province of that name. Marquart connects Kirkānān with Kirkān and seeks it at Qalat (Ency. 4/376; Le Strange 332). As for the province, it must have extended so far as to include, in general terms, "the whole of the country occupied by the Kakars. The expedition of A.H. 44 to the country between Multān and Kabul certainly shows that it must have comprised the Sulaimānī range to the south of the Cūmil; and the celebrity of its horses would appear to point to a tract further to the west, including Sahārāwan and Mashkhi, where horses .... are still in great demand." (See a valuable note on Kaikānān in Sir H. M. Elliot: Hist. of India (1867 A.D.), Vol. I, 381 seq.)
No great battle is reported during this incursion; only a few local skirmishes could have taken place as suggested by the words, 'the enemy opposed him (al-Muhallab) and fought him and his followers' (Bal.432). Nor does it seem likely that al-Muhallab should have brought a large and numerous army with him or that the attack was in any way well-planned. In all probability he could only have been at the command of a small detachment, consisting mostly of his own tribesmen, the Azdites. Hence it is no surprise that the inroad left no lasting effects and that it did not result in new annexations to the Caliphate. Farishta adds that he returned to the head-quarters of the army at Khurasan with plunder and many prisoners. This, indeed, is all that he could have gained. Yet this dash into the mountainous country on the north-west of India and even as far as Lahore inside it was but a bold stroke of military adventure. No doubt, the inhospitable country of Qīqān had been attempted even before but the vicinity of Bānnū and Lahore had not yet been reached by the Muslim warriors. Farishta is right in saying of him that 'he was the first chieftain who spread the banners of the true faith on the plains of Hind.' Even the Muslim penetration into al-Sind in later times came

* In this connection it is helpful to note that in the words of Dh.(p.22 l.1) the scene of al-Muhallab's encounter lay in the neighbourhood of Qandābil.

(2). Bal. 432; IAth. 3/225; Yag. 1/747; Notice of this expedition is also found in Elliot, 2/414-15.
through the southern region of Makran; hence, al-Muhallab's expedition from the north-west stands out conspicuous.

The above expedition of al-Muhallab could not have lasted for long because in the very next year (A.H. 45) the governorship of al-'Iraq passed on from Ibn 'Amir to Ziyād b. 'Abīhi who within a few months of his appointment(1) recalled 'Abdūr Raḥmān from Sijistān and some time afterwards appointed al-Hakam b. ʿAmr al-Ghifārī to the governorship of Khorāsān (2) in whose company al-Muhallab is also noticed. Al-Hakam is reported to have proceeded to Harat and thence to al-Juzajān, between Herā al-Šam and Balkh, which he reduced. But in the course of the campaign he was overtaken by such hardship and scarcity that the troops could only subsist on their riding beasts. At that time al-Hakam was accompanied by al-Mihallab who is said to have 'proved his strength and bravery' (3).

Al-Muhallab must have continued in Khorāsān under al-Hakam till the year 50 A.H. in which he took a prominent part in the expedition against the people of Jabal al-ʿAshall, a mountain in Khorāsān. The expedition was undertaken by al-Hakam at the instance of Ziyād b. Abīhi who was tempted to it by the prospect of an easy victory and rich booty.

(1). Bal. 397.

(2). According to Yqb. 2/264, al-Hakam entered Khorāsān in 44 but the report in Tab. 2/81 that Ziyād was appointed governor of al-'Iraq in 45 and that he after his appointment sent al-Hakam to Khorāsān, seems more correct. Further the account in Tab. 2/79-80 suggests that the arrival of al-Hakam in Khorāsān should have taken place a considerable time after the appointment of Ziyād, perhaps in 47 A.H. (cf. Tab. 2/84).

(3). Yqb. 2/264.
It so happened that when the army of al-Hakam had penetrated far into the mountains, the natives blocked all the passes and exits and encircled it from all sides. In his distress, al-Hakam turned to al-Mu'ahallab whom he entrusted with the direction of operations. Al-Mu'ahallab, with his characteristic resourcefulness, eventually captured a prominent man from the enemy side and asked him to help in effecting an escape from the difficult position in which they had been hedged round or, in the alternative, to suffer death. Thereupon the man advised him to kindle fire along one of the various routes and to order the baggage to be moved in its direction so as to give the enemy the impression that it was intended to force an exit that way. When convinced of it, the enemy would concentrate all his forces on that one point leaving the other exits unguarded through which it would be quite possible to outrun him. Al-Mu'ahallab adopted this plan which succeeded very well. The besiegers were outwitted and the Muslim army returned with rich booty. On the way back, al-Mu'ahallab commanded the rear-guard of al-Hakam's army and there was another encounter with the Turks who tried to intercept him in the narrow mountain passes (1).

Al-Hakam b. 'Amr died soon after his return from the above expedition. Henceforward the name of al-Mu'ahallab does not occur among the high officers attending on the succeeding governors during the years 51-55, and it cannot be said whether he continued in Khurāsān or, more probably returned to al-Baṣra.

(1) Tab. 2/109.
In the year A.H. 56(1), Mu‘awiya conferred the governorship of Khurāsān on Sa‘īd b. ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān who proceeded thither attended, among others, by ‘Aṣṣ b. Tha‘labā al-Taimī, Talha b. ‘Abdullāh b. Khalaf al-Khuza‘ī known as Talḥat al-Talahāt and al-Muhallab. Sa‘īd crossed al-Nahr i.e. the Oxus, and marched upon Bukhārā, on the lower course of the Zarafshān, which town he entered after Queen Khatūn,(2) the then ruler of the place, had capitulated.

From Bukhārā Sa‘īd advanced towards Samarqand which place had not at that time an independent ruler (3). The people of al-Sughd (4), however, gathered to put up very strong resistance and the battle for Samarqand raged vehemently for three days during which al-Muhallab lost an eye. Eventually, the town was forced to surrender whereupon Sa‘īd retired (Bal. 411; Tab. 2/178-9).

The following two verses are preserved from al-Muhallab on the loss of his eye:

(Ikh. 2/146).

The loss of al-Muhallab’s eye is also said to have occurred at al-Talaqān (5) instead of Samarqand. It is not

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(1). 56 according to Yaq. 3/135.
(2). The Arabs found Bukhārā ruled by a woman, the widow of the late prince, who acted as regent for her infant son Tughbāda.
(3). Al-Marshākhī p.49.
(4). The name of al-Sughd was generally applied to ‘lands east of Bukhārā from Daḥūsiyya to Samarqand.’ Sometimes, however, Bukhārā, Kish and Nasaf were also included in it (Ency. 4/473).
(5). On the road from Merv al-Kūdh to Balkh. Also there was a town in Tukhārīstān east of Balkh properly called Tāqaqān but sometimes also referred to as Talaqān (Yaq. 3/491).
clear what occasion is referred to. Sa‘īd or perhaps al-Hakam may also have had a battle at al-Talaqān during the course of their campaigns which, nevertheless, is not recorded.

Al-Muhallab is again noticed in Khurāsān in the retinue of Salm b. Ziyād who succeeded to the governorship of that province on behalf of Yazīd b. Mu‘awiya in the year A.H.61. Among other colleagues of al-Muhallab at that time were Ṭalḥa b. ‘Abdullāh al-Khuṣayfī (Ṭalḥat al-Ṭalāḥāt), ‘Umar b. ‘Ubaidullāh b. Masmār al-Taimī and ‘Abdullāh b. Khāzim al-Sulamī. Proceeding to Khurāsān, Salm stayed for a while at Nīsābūr and then embarked on various expeditions into Khwārizm, Samarqand and Bukhārā, the last of which concerns us most for the part al-Muhallab played in it. When faced with the overwhelmingly superior forces of Salm, Khātūn, the ruler of Bukhārā (1), in her utter helplessness turned to Tarkhūn(2), the king of al-Ṣughd, and invited him to come to her to take her in marriage and thereby gain for himself the rulership of Bukhārā. Tarkhūn complied with the invitation and advanced towards Bukhārā with an army 120,000 strong to forestall which Salm despatched al-Muhallab at the head of the van-guard followed by other troops. In the battle that

(1). It must be remembered that hitherto the penetration of Muslims in the country of Transoxiana was not systematic at all. The successive governors of Khurāsān led expeditions into the land from time to time and secured the capitulation of particular towns but no sooner did they turn back than the natives re-asserted their independence and returned to their original state.

(2). Tarkhūn, also written Tarkhan, probably a title (and not a name) of the Turkish rulers of Samarqand. (Ency. 4/129). At the time of the Arab invasion we hear of individual Tashkans ruling in different parts of Transoxiana. (Tab. and al-Nāsirī).
ensued the Muslims worsted the enemy by dint of their strong archery; Tarkhūn was killed and his army was annihilated (Yqb. 2/300).

We are indebted to al-Narshakhi (1), who is also quoted by A. Vambery (2), for a very rare and detailed account of the above battle which also affords us a proof that al-Muhallab had by now attained the position of an eminent knight whose loss was bound to affect the morale of the troops and whose gallantry was deeply impressed in the mind of the lieutenants of the army. The account of al-Narshakhi, while it confirms Khatūn's invitation to Tarkhūn and his response to it, yet differs from the account in Yqb. in one important respect. According to it, the chief role on the opposite side in the encounter with al-Muhallab belonged to Bidūn who, along with Tarkhūn, had rushed to the succour of Khatūn from Turkestan. On learning of the arrival of Bidūn, Salm deputed al-Muhallab to go on a reconnoitring mission in order to have an estimate of the strength of the enemy. Al-Muhallab urged that it was inadvisable to risk the life of an eminent man like him in a task which could very well be done by a less highly placed man whose

An abridged Persian translation of his valuable book on the history of Bukhāra has recently been published under the title:

تاریخ بخارا، ترجمه أبوضفر أحمد محترم، نشرت نشره المعارف، تأليف محمد سعيد بن عبد العزيز خليل خان

See pp. 49-52 of the same for the account quoted.

loss would cause no disorder among the troops. Salm, however, persisted in his request whereupon al-Muhallab agreed to comply with it provided that he be given one man from each regiment and that his mission be kept a secret. Accordingly he set out by night without the knowledge of the troops.

The next morning Salm let the news be known to the rest of his troops who began to murmur and to say: "Thou hast sent the Emir al-Muhallab on before us, so that he may snatch the best of the booty from our mouths; if a battle had been in question, no doubt we should have been the foremost." In fact many of them, inspired by mere greed, hurried after al-Muhallab and overtook him. As soon as he perceived their approach, he exclaimed: 'Ye have done wrong; we have come as far as this unperceived; now ye have aroused the attention of the enemy and the affair can but end ill.' Nevertheless al-Muhallab took courage. He numbered the Arabs he had with him and found they were 900 in number. Scarcely had he set them in battle-array when the enemy's trumpet sounded, and the Turks in their first onset cut down 400 of the Muslims; the rest took to flight in the wildest confusion. Al-Muhallab with a few of his followers was surrounded by the enemy. In the utmost peril he shouted aloud for succour. His voice was heard in the camp of Salm who, however, was loth to move. But the reproach of a lieutenant of his, 'Abdullah b. Khudān (Vambery: Djudan), who urged that al-Muhallab was
not the man to cry for help unless faced with the immediate danger of death, went home and ultimately the troops were ordered to go to the relief of al-Muhallab. Seeing their countrymen approach, al-Muhallab and his comrades roused themselves for one final effort and the whole Arab army took part in the battle. Soon Bihdun was killed (1), his army was routed and a very large amount of booty fell into the hands of the Muslims. The battle proved decisive; Queen Khātūn had no alternative but to submit to the victors, with whom she made peace.

Al-Muhallab showed himself the strategist that he was when he pressed upon his chief, Salm b. Ziyād, his own view as to how to deal with the noxious problem of the hostile native chiefs. Even during those days there still lingered in Khurāsān a band of native chiefs who were continuously engaged in fomenting trouble against the Muslim conquerors. The successive governors frequently waged war against them but invariably retired to Merv al-Shahjān on the advent of the winter. The hostile chiefs during the same time assembled together at a town in Khurāsān not far from the borders of Khwārizm where they availed themselves of this welcome respite to concert their rebellious activities. On one such occasion when Salm too called a halt to military operations during the winter al-Muhallab insisted that he should be allowed to raid the rendezvous of the hostile chiefs.

(1). Cf. also Bal. 413.
So, he proceeded at the head of four or six thousand warriors, laid siege to the city and presented the chiefs with a demand for submission. The chiefs sued for peace on the terms that they should pay as ransom for their lives a sum exceeding twenty million dirhems. Al-Muhallab agreed and received the ransom not in cash but in kind as the agreement contained a stipulation to that effect (inserted probably on behalf of the chiefs themselves because of their inability to pay in coins). Taking advantage of this, al-Muhallab is reported to have set such a low price at the goods offered to him that the real value of the articles received by him was estimated at fifty millions. Salm was naturally very pleased with al-Muhallab for the successful results achieved by him (1).

Al-Muhallab continued in Khurāsān as a lieutenant of Salm b. Ziyād till, a few months after the death of Yazīd b. Mu‘awiya (Rabi‘a I, 64), the people of the province turned against Salm and forced him to retire, -- the same fate that his brother ‘Ubaydullāh b. Ziyād met at the hands of the Basrans about the same time. As Salm withdrew from the province, he left al-Muhallab behind to act as his deputy. But Salm had only reached Mshabur when he was met by ‘Abdullāh b. Khāzim al-Sulamī who pulled him up for having handed over the province to a Yamanite, and extorted for himself a writ of appointment as successor over the whole of Khurāsān. As al-Muhallab heard of the advance of

(1). Tab. 2/393-4.
Abdullah b. Khāzim towards Merv, he thought it fit to withdraw altogether from the disputed post, leaving in his place a man of Banū Jusham b. Sa'd (b. Zaid Hanāt b. Tamīm) who was later on fatally wounded in his struggle against Ibn Khāzim(1). The decision of al-Muhallab to retire was indeed based on a realistic estimate of the local situation because the number of al-'Azd on whose support he could count, was still very small in Khurāsān.

We have now come to the end of the early career of al-Muhallab as a soldier and as a lieutenant in the army of the provincial governors of Sijistān and Khurāsān. During this period we have had examples of his bravery, spirit of military adventure, resourcefulness and regard for strategy, one, however cannot help feeling disappointed that the records of al-Muhallab's early life are very meagre and are interspersed with long blanks. Surely, the man who, as we will immediately see in the following pages, stood marked out for the leadership of a most difficult and hazardous campaign, must have had a much more brilliant and eventful record behind him. Curiously enough, every time we meet al-Muhallab in the previous pages we find his honour increased and his prestige enhanced but we are told very little about his deeds. It must be realised that al-Muhallab had not yet had an opportunity of acting as independent commander in which position alone

(1). Tab. 2/489-90. The man cannot be Bukair b. 'Isāj b. 'Ujahb, as mentioned in Naqā'id 372 note 3, because Bukair survived long afterwards.
he could bring into full play his distinctive qualities of leadership and strategic manoeuvring. This position was to be his from now onwards and therefore it is only in the following chapters that we see him at his best.